



State of Illinois
Illinois Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission



Annual Report 2020

Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020



Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

528 South Fifth Street, Suite 209, Springfield, Illinois 62701
217-557-4495 (V) • 217-303-8010 (VP) • 888-261-2698 (TTY)
www.idhhc.illinois.gov



528 South 5th Street, Suite 209 • Springfield, Illinois 62701

To Governor Pritzker and the People of Illinois:

On behalf of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC), I am pleased to submit the 2020 Annual Report reflecting the fiscal year from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. It is important to acknowledge that Tonia Bogener, Legal Counsel, served as Interim Director for nearly three years before I assumed my new role as a Director on November 2, 2020.

Governed by eleven (11) Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor's Office, the Commission promotes education and awareness of the legal requirements for effective communication. During the course of the fiscal year, the Commission completed its 5 year strategic plan and continued to pursue its mission to fulfill core functions to serve the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind population of the State of Illinois: promote independence for individuals with a hearing loss; increase quality and number of sign language interpreters; provide educational awareness regarding hearing loss; and provide statewide resources. In addition, the Commission serves as the regulatory and licensing body responsible for licensing sign language interpreters in the State in accordance to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

I encourage you to look at this annual report reflecting important information and statistics during the period. While there are notable accomplishments highlighted in this report, there is much work to do to assuring equality, respect, accessibility and independence for all individuals with a hearing loss. The Commission looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the state agencies as well as partnerships with the stakeholders to identify, address and remove systemic and isolated barriers deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals face on a daily basis.

In closing, I want to thank the Commissioners for their commitment to governing the Commission and the staff for their work diligently despite facing challenges and limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Benro Ogunyipe, Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE COMMISSION

Commissioners & Staff _____	4
Mission Statement, Objectives & Core Functions _____	5

PROGRAM & OPERATIONS

Commission Program Highlights _____	6
Commission Budget: Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriation & Expenditure _____	7
By the Numbers FY20, FY19, & FY18 _____	8
Legislative Bills & Resolutions _____	8

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act)

Interpreter Licensure Board _____	9
Illinois Interpreter Licensing & BEI Certification _____	10
Illinois Interpreter Training & Interpreter Preparation Programs _____	11

THE COMMISSION

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) is an executive state agency that advocates on behalf of the interests of persons in Illinois who are deaf or hard of hearing.

COMMISSIONERS

The Commission is governed by eleven (11) Commissioners. The Commissioners are appointed by the Governor's Office and represent different geographical areas of Illinois.

Dennis O'Brien	–	Wheaton (Chairperson)
Amy Blough	–	Peoria
Joseph Culpepper	–	Bloomington
Susan Dramin-Weiss	–	Champaign
David Frazier	–	University Park
Lori Krakora	–	Naperville
Jarom Matheson	–	Chicago
Joseph Obermaier	–	Oak Brook
Bryen Yunashko	–	Chicago

STAFF

The Commission is operated by a team of dedicated staff members.

Benro Ogunyipe	-	Director*
Tonia Bogener	-	Legal Counsel
Dana Craig	-	Program Coordinator
Patty Greene	-	Personnel Manager
Janet Lambert	-	Interpreter Coordinator
Lee Taylor	-	Office Assistant

*Effective November 2020

INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF PROGRAM

The Commission operates the Interpreter for the Deaf Program that includes Interpreter Licensing and BEI Certification in accordance to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Interpreter Licensure Board provides recommendations to the Commission Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. Information about the sign language interpreters including board members of the Interpreter Licensure Board and Interpreter Licensing and BEI Certification during the fiscal year can be found on Pages 9, 10, and 11.



Mission Statement

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission shall promote system change, community education and collaboration to advance effective communication access for all individuals with hearing loss in Illinois.

Objectives

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) promotes education and awareness about hearing loss and the legal requirements for effective communication on behalf of people with hearing loss in Illinois.

The Commission strives to promote independence for individuals with hearing loss by providing technical assistance and training to enhance public and private programs, and by making legislative and policy recommendations to assure accessibility.

The Commission provides statewide resources to assist the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind community in Illinois. The Commission also regulates licensure for sign language interpreters and maintain an online directory of all licensed Illinois sign language interpreters.

Core Functions

- Promote independence for individuals with a hearing loss
- Increase quality and number of sign language interpreters
- Provide educational awareness regarding hearing loss
- Provide statewide resources

Vision Statement

All Illinois residents with a hearing loss will enjoy the benefits of a fully accessible society enabling each person to participate in and contribute to all aspects of life.

History

In 1995, various leaders in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community started discussing the desire for a governmental body to focus on the needs of individuals with hearing loss. This group developed into a Task Force to lobby for the formation of a new state agency.

The Governor issued an amendatory veto to legislation establishing Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) as a state agency and changed it to an advisory committee under the Department of Human Services. Based on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community outcry, the House and Senate both overrode the Governor's veto. While officially established on January 1, 1997, IDHHC opened its office in November 1998, when the first Director was hired.

PROGRAM & OPERATIONS

Statewide Services, Resources, and Information

The Commission provides statewide services, resources, and information about Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. During the Fiscal Year 2020, the Commission received 15,017 public inquiries and provided requested information and referral as appropriate to individuals, and public and private entities for issues including, but not limited to, accessibility and accommodation issues, advocacy organizations, assistive technology, centers on independent living, discrimination complaints, educational options, service and resource availability, sign language interpreters and communication access, telecommunication equipment, and state Vocational Rehabilitation(VR)program. On an ongoing basis, the Commission reviews federal and state statutes, regulations, and policies regarding Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

Community Outreach & Collaboration

The Commission promotes outreach effort to all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities to increase visibility and awareness of the Commission program and operations. Some of the highlights during the Fiscal Year 2020, the Commission presented or participated in the meetings: ADA Steering Committee, Chicago Hearing Society Victim Program Stakeholder's Meetings, Deaf Services Coordinator Meetings, Equip for Equality Priorities Meeting, Illinois Advisory Board for Services for Persons Who are DeafBlind, Illinois Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Conference, Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) Outreach Conference, Illinois Service Resource Center (ISRC) Statewide Leadership Meetings, ISD Advisory Council Meetings, National Council on Disability Town Hall Meeting held in Chicago, Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf Meetings, and State LEAD-K Workgroup.

Technical Assistance, Consultation, & Training Support

The Commission provides technical assistance, consultation, and training support to improve access to public and private programs and services for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. One of the highlights during the Fiscal Year 2020, the Commission distributes the 4179 Communication Visor Cards to state, local, and municipal law enforcement agencies. The Commission continues to educate service providers and employers of their obligations to provide effective communication under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4179

Number of Communication Visor Cards Distributed

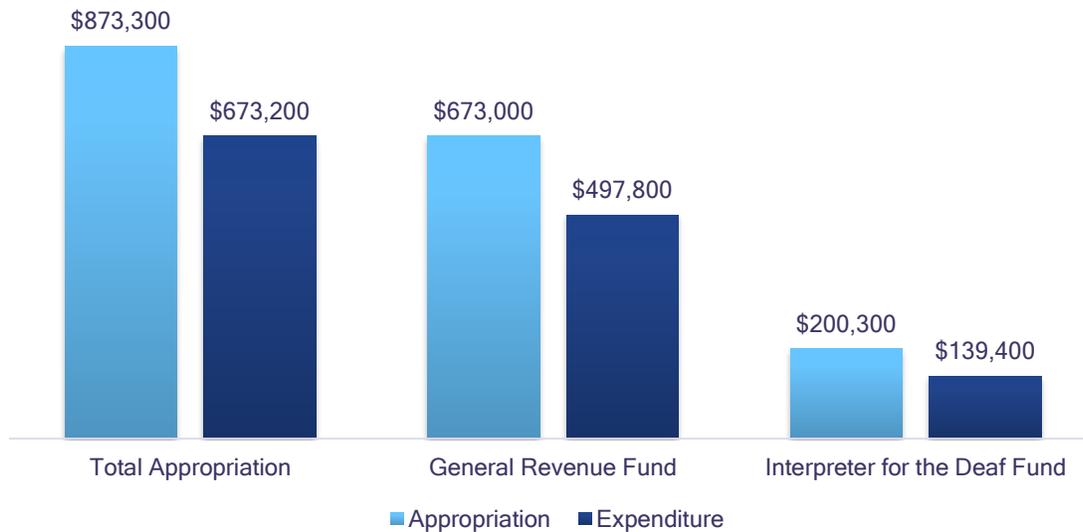
COVID-19 Resource and Impact to the Commission Operations

The Commission launched COVID-19 Resource on the website and developed ASL videos of key guidance regarding COVID-19 based upon publications by the Illinois Department of Public Health. The Commission collaborated with the Governor's Office to work with the TV networks to ensure that the sign language interpreters and captioning are always visible on the TV screens. The COVID-19 significantly impacted the Commission operations including the cancellation of the Commission and Interpreter Licensure Board meetings, limited staff capacity and remote work, suspension of IL BEI Interpreter Testing, and the cancellation of the Annual Interpreter Conference.

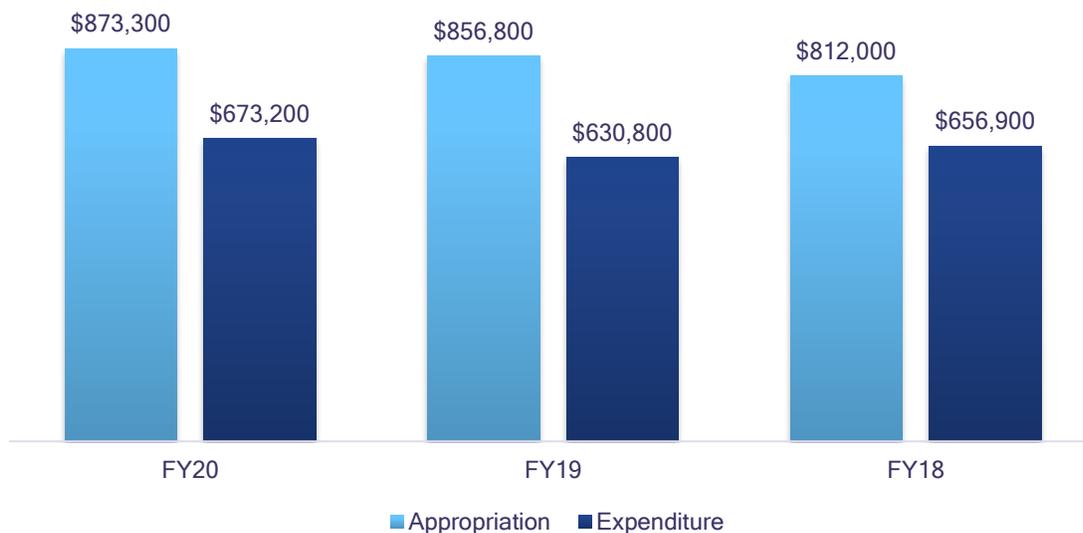
COMMISSION BUDGET

\$873,300

Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriation & Expenditure



Appropriations & Expenditures History



BY THE NUMBERS

	FY20	FY19	FY18
Public Inquiries	15,017	15,774	13,317
Educational and Informational Materials Distributed	48,692	23,472	7,040
Interpreters Participated in IDHHC Sponsored or Hosted Professional Development Opportunities	123	1,513	428
Communication Visor Cards Distributed	4,179	6,691	N/A
Subscribers to IDHHC Electronic Mail Communications	658	652	640

48692

Number of Educational Information and Materials Distributed

Legislative Bills & Resolutions

The Illinois General Assembly's main functions include enacting, amending or repealing laws; passing resolutions; adopting spending bills; and examining proposed legislation. During the legislative session, thousands of bills and resolutions were introduced in the areas of government, education, regulation, human needs, health and safety, agriculture and conversation, transportation, rights and remedies, and business and employment. The Commission monitors bills and resolutions that are relevant to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities in Illinois. The Commission also provides a list of relevant bills and resolutions to the public on the website for informational purposes only and does not necessarily reflect the Commission's position. During the Fiscal Year 2020, some bills became laws that effect the needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind population. Visit the Commission website for a list of bills that became Public Acts.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

The Commission is a licensing body responsible for the enforcement of the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Commission also administers the Illinois Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification test; maintains an online directory of all licensed interpreters by proficiency levels, geographic regions, counties, and contact information; and conducts investigation of alleged violations and in cases of substantiated allegations, various voluntary corrective measures are used including imposition of discipline when appropriate.

INTERPRETER LICENSURE BOARD MEMBERS

The Interpreter Licensure Board consists of seven (7) members appointed by the IDHHC Director. The Board is composed of four (4) licensed interpreters for the deaf and three (3) deaf or hard of hearing consumers and the IDHHC Interpreter Coordinator. The Board provides recommendations to the IDHHC Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

Laura Braucht	–	Jacksonville (Chairperson)
Michele Cunningham	–	Chicago
Donna Elliott	–	Creston
Barbara Pacourek	–	Brookfield
Debby Sampson	–	Glenview

STAFF

Janet Lambert	–	Interpreter Coordinator
----------------------	---	--------------------------------

123

Number of Interpreters Participated in the Commission Sponsored or Hosted Professional Development Opportunities

Annual Interpreter Conference

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commission cancelled its Annual Interpreter Conference scheduled for April 2020, at the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS). The Commission sponsored alternative options for interpreter professional development opportunities: Summer Institute I & II.

**2020 Annual
Interpreter
Conference**
Cancelled

Illinois Interpreter Licensing & BEI Certification

	FY20	FY19	FY18
Total Licensing & BEI Applications	1,279	1,259	1,252

Illinois Interpreter Licensing Statistics

806

Licensed Interpreters

75

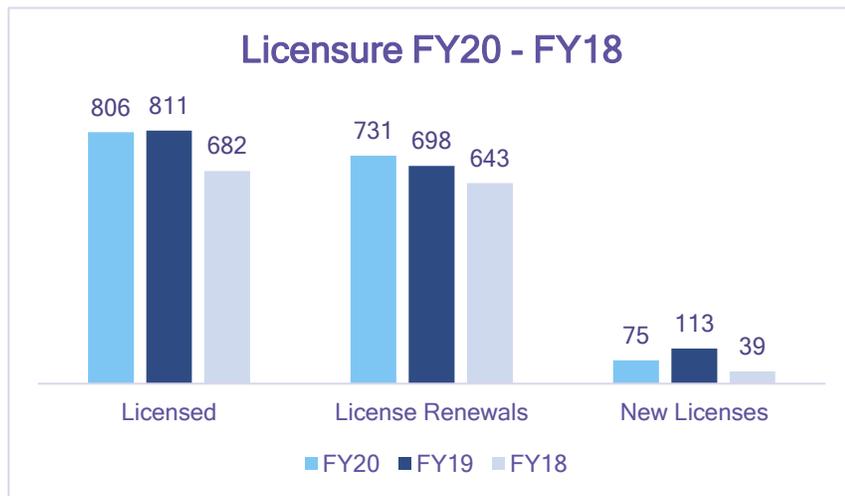
New Licenses

731

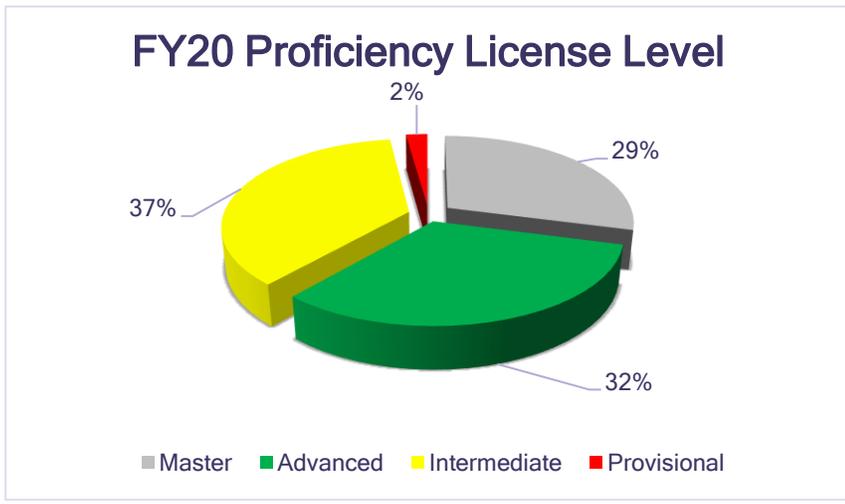
License Renewals

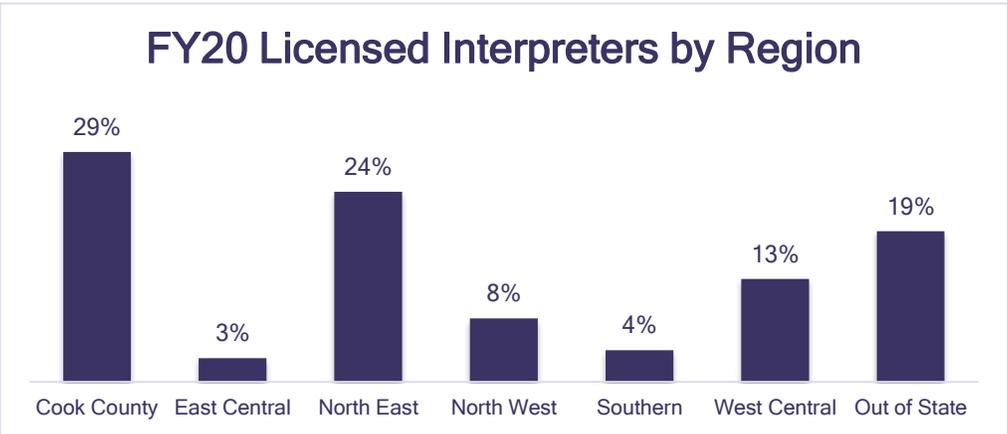
35

Proficiency Level Upgrades



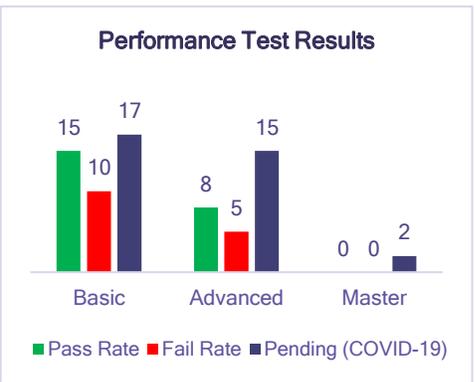
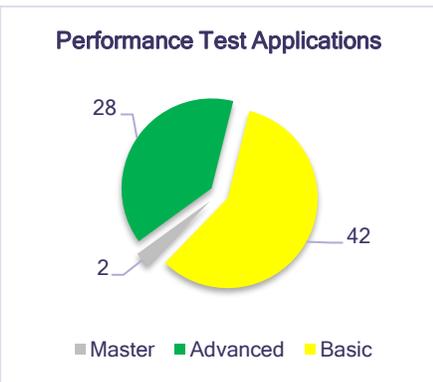
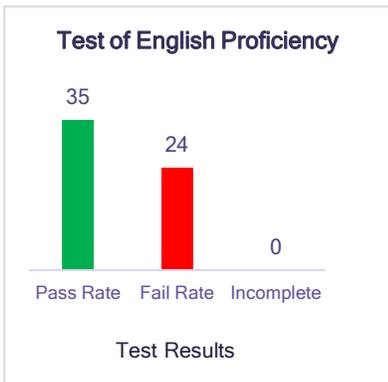
The Commission Launched the Enterprise Licensing and Permitting (ELP) Platform for Online Processing of All Sign Language Interpreter Applications and Renewals.





BEI Testing and Certification Statistics

	FY20		FY19		FY18	
BEI Certification Tests Administered	131		272		300	
Test of English Proficiency	72	59	126	146	154	146
Performance Test						



Illinois Interpreter Training & Interpreter Preparation Programs

- College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn
- Columbia College Chicago, Chicago
- Illinois Central College, East Peoria
- John A. Logan College, Carterville
- *Quincy University, Quincy
- *William Rainey Harper College, Palatine

- Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills
- Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville
- Waubensee Community College, Aurora
- *MacMurray College, Jacksonville
- *Richland Community College, Decatur

*Denotes Program Suspended or Closed



Electronic Publication available at www.idhhc.illinois.gov

Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

**528 South Fifth Street, Suite 209
Springfield, Illinois 62701**

**217-557-4495 (V) • 217-303-8010 (VP) • 888-261-2698 (TTY)
www.idhhc.illinois.gov**

